

Pickles, Mark, *Gospel-Driven Anglicanism* (Chase Side, London: Oak Hill College, 2017)

Only a rich theological vision can truly fuel and sustain a strategy of the order that is needed today for renewal of the Church of England... (p 1)

Jonathan Edwards writes about preaching:

“I should think myself in the way of my duty (preaching), **to raise the affections of my hearers as high as possibly I can**, provided that they are affected with nothing but truth, and with affections that are not disagreeable to the nature of the subject..” (J Edwards, *Concerning the Revival* (Yale 4:388))

That perfectly encapsulates the aim of this book – to encourage a convictional Anglicanism rooted in biblical truth that captivates our hearts. (p 2)

In order to answer the question ‘**Why bother?**’ adequately, time is needed to explain what authentic, historic Anglicanism really is, time to unearth and display its riches and treasures and time to articulate a vision of Gospel-driven Anglicanism that might fuel a sustainable long-term strategy for reforming and renewing a denomination. (p 8)

Dr Martyn Lloyd Jones once wrote:

“There is all the difference in the world between organizing a movement and the sheer weight of truth producing the movement inevitably.” (*Letters of M Lloyd Jones* p 134)

(p 10)

We will use this as the basis for exploring what is genuine, historic, authentic Anglicanism. Every ordained minister must assent to this and it helpfully defines the essential ingredients and characteristics of Anglicanism:

- It is Trinitarian
- It stands as part of (not apart from) the Catholic, Apostolic Church
- It sits under the authority of Scripture
- It accepts the Catholic Creeds
- It finds further expression in the 39 Articles, the Book of Common Prayer and the Ordinal (these are noted as being particularly defining)
- It self-consciously positions itself as a Church that is doctrinally orthodox, holding fast to the biblical, historic faith
- But it does so with the expressed intent of proclaiming the unchanging gospel to the people it ministers to today, as clearly, relevantly and accessibly as possible (“to proclaim afresh in each generation”)

(p 13)

Only against the backdrop of my sinfulness and God’s holiness, do I really see the glory and splendour of the cross and the gospel of grace. Following on from the Confession in the Communion service, there are words of

absolution that reassure us that God has 'promised forgiveness of sins' to all who truly repent and then we come to the so-called "comfortable words", verses of Scripture that speak words of gospel grace about the Lord Jesus who came into the world to save sinners. Such a biblically soaked liturgy serves to magnify the cross and the grace and love of God.

"Above all things you must give humble and hearty thanks to God ... for the redemption of the world by the death and passion of our Saviour Christ, both God and man who did humble himself even to the death upon the cross for us miserable sinners who lay in darkness and the shadow of death, that he might make us the children of God and exalt us to everlasting life. And to the end that we should always remember **the exceeding great love of our Master and only Saviour Jesus Christ**, thus dying for us and the innumerable benefits which by his precious blood-shedding he hath obtained to us..." (3<sup>rd</sup> Prayer of Exhortation *Book of Common Prayer*)

(p 24)

The local church is THE church in microcosm, not simply a part of the church as though it is lacking something. When believers gather together and the Word of God is faithfully preached and the sacraments administered, there you have the Church of Jesus Christ. However, it also recognizes that there is more to say about the Church than just the local church. Churches belong together and need to have structures that enable them to relate to each other and a doctrinal basis around which they can unite. (p 55)

Anglicanism is not congregational, it does affirm the primacy of the local church but recognizes the importance of the wider church and its interconnectedness with other Anglican churches, sharing the same doctrinal basis and form of church government (Episcopal). The New Testament can also speak of the 'church' meaning more than just a local congregation or the 'one, true Church' (that is the invisible Church). (p 56)

James K. A. Smith writes:

"Being a disciple of Jesus is not primarily a matter of getting the right ideas and doctrines and beliefs into your head in order to guarantee proper behavior; rather it's a matter of being the best person who loves rightly – who loves God and neighbor and is oriented to the world by the primacy of that love. We are made to be such people by our immersion in the material practices of Christian worship – through affective impact, overtime, of sights and smell in water and wine. The Liturgy is a 'hearts and minds' strategy, a pedagogy that trains us as disciples precisely by putting our bodies through a regimen of repeated practices that get hold of our heart and 'aim' our love towards the Kingdom of God. Before we articulate a worldview – we worship... that's the kind of animals we are first and foremost: loving, desiring, affective, liturgical animals who for the most part don't inhabit the world as thinkers or cognitive machines." (Smith, James K.A., *Desiring the Kingdom* (Baker Grand Rapids p 33)

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In 1945, the Church of England published a report, "Towards the Conversion of England", which set out, "in detail an ambitious programme to reach the nation with the gospel through a transformed and mission-focused national

Church” (Richardson, John P. *A Strategy that Changes a Denomination* Lulu Raleigh NC 2011 p4). Written over 70 years ago, it was well aware of the size of the task it faced:

“We cannot expect to get far with evangelism until three facts are faced. Firstly, the vast majority of the English people need to be converted to Christianity. Secondly a large number of Church people also require to be converted ... thirdly, such personal knowledge of Christ is the only satisfactory basis for testimony to others...the Church is ill-equipped for its unparalleled task and opportunity... it is for the Church in this day of God, by a rededication of itself to its Lord, to receive from him that baptism of Holy Ghost and of fire which will empower it to sound the call and give the awaited lead.” (Commission on Evangelism *Towards the Conversion of England* London: Press and publications board of the Church Assembly 1945 para 81, 33)  
(p 64)

“We exhort you... to seek for Christ’s sheep that are dispersed abroad and for his children who are in the midst of this naughty world, **that they may be saved through Christ for ever** ...and seeing that you cannot by any other means compass the doing of so weighty a work, **pertaining to the salvation of man**, but with doctrine and exhortation taken out of the Holy Scriptures...” (Ordering of Priests *Book of Common Prayer*)  
(p 65)

What goes around comes around. J I Packer’s assessment of the Church of England, written in 1978 was:

“As an evangelical trying to interpret what I see by Scripture, I am forced to believe that the Church of England is under judgment in these days for multiple unfaithfulness to the gospel, and that our overmastering need is for God to revive his work and in wrath to remember mercy (Habbakuk 3:2; Psalm 85:4-7) and that we should be seeking his face constantly for just this (cf. Psalm 44; Isaiah 64).” (J I Packer and N T Wright *Anglican Evangelical Identity: Yesterday and Today* (London Latimer Trust 2008 p 71)  
(p 76)

We follow a Saviour who walked towards the place of judgment not away from it and removed from there sinners upon whom that judgment should fall.

If J I Packer is right that the Church of England is under the judgment of God, or at least heading that way, then it seems to be completely contrary to the nature of the gospel, that gospel ministers should therefore absent themselves from the arena of judgment instead of deliberately moving nearer to it. (p 81)

So we need to hold to the Truth we have received with conviction AND humility. Resisting the twin dangers of convictional arrogance that assumes we are always right, that not only is Scripture without error but so too are we in our interpretation of it or a misplaced humility that doubts the possibility of knowing Truth truly and is filled with uncertainty and confusion. (p 82)

Given that we no longer have apostles and prophets today as the Word of God is complete, we would equate the role of the pastor-teacher most closely with that of a pastor/gospel ministry – what was the purpose of Christ giving this gift to the Church”? To what end?

Paul is clear, “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12-13). (p 96)

Simply looking at those figures shows us that one thing is crystal clear: taken as a whole, the members of the Church of England are not being bled dry. There is plenty of potential not only for increase in giving but for substantial increase in giving.

There are at least, two vital components to sacrificial giving:

1. Being gripped by the gospel of grace
  2. Being gripped by a compelling vision
- (p 98)

We do not give to keep things ticking over or to balance the books, but because Jesus Christ came to seek and to save the lost; because he is building his church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it; because the gospel brings people from darkness to light, rescues people from the kingdom of Satan to God’s eternal and glorious kingdom, saves people from God’s eternal wrath and brings them into the future glory of a renewed creation in which God will dwell with his people and in which there will be no more sorrow, suffering, sin or death.

Each local church needs to understand, proclaim and explain a Gospel-driven vision, but so too does the denomination. A vision for reaching the nation with the gospel of Jesus Christ, an acute awareness that this is a matter of life and death – eternal life and eternal death – and a profound awareness that this is something that is worth investing our lives in wholeheartedly. (p 100)

As the Word of God is faithfully taught, is made central in the life and ministry of a local church, and begins to shape and drive all that is done, gradually a church begins to change.

Alongside the ministry of the Word, a new minister must also take time to get to know and love the congregation. This is true for all gospel ministry, but especially so in a revitalization context – the minister must love and serve the flock. (p 116)

In ‘The Effective Anglican’, Lee Gatiss writes:

“The only thing keeping us alive as a church is the gospel, the living voice of the living God in his word. Who is going to keep us alive by continually unleashing that word from the pulpits of this land, and pouring it out onto the

parched soil of our parishes, if we will not take up that challenge and endure whatever hardships may come our way as a result? ... so let's make sure we hear today and do not harden our hearts to the sound of thousands of Church of England congregations in every corner of the land, who are crying out for someone to feed them longing for someone to pastor them dying for someone to bring them the word of life. Surely as long as that's possible for us and however difficult it might get in the National Church, we should be grabbing this opportunity to be missionaries to the various peoples now living in this country?" (Gatiss, Lee, *The Affective Anglican Church Society/Lost Coin Books* London, 2015, p 25)

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The third verse of the great missionary hymn by Frank Houghton contains these words,

*We bear the torch that flaming  
Fell from the hands of those  
Who gave their lives proclaiming  
That Jesus died and rose  
Ours is the same commission  
The same glad message ours  
Fired by the same ambition  
To Thee we yield our powers*

(Hymn *Facing a Task Unfinished* F Houghton) (p 129)

The root of the problem is that too many of us, as **evangelical Anglicans, have divorced ecclesiology (our doctrine of the church) from evangelism and discipleship.**

Jesus sent out his disciples with the Great Commission to "go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). We can – and often do – miss declaring that it is impossible to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and not to be a committed member of a local church. As Article 27 states, "they had receive baptism rightly are grafted **into the Church...**" The Great Commission is not a call simply to seek lots of new converts, but under the authority and Lordship of Christ, to build his Church. The Great Commission is nothing other than a post resurrection exposition of the promise of Jesus that he will build his Church. (Matthew 16:18). We must not divorce mission from ecclesiology. (p 132)

A local Anglican church with a gospel-heart ought to have a vision for the whole deanery, to pray and work towards all the churches in the deanery being won for the gospel. It is inevitably a long-term vision, but imagine the impact for the gospel in an area if the whole deanery was filled with churches that held fast to God's Word and proclaimed the gospel faithfully.

The flow of the gospel is always outwards to the ends of the earth; a vision for the gospel that stops short of that is not a gospel-vision. Therefore, local

Anglican churches ought not only to have a vision to reach their deanery, but beyond that – their diocese. (p 139)

In his stimulating essay 'The Supreme Motive', Samuel Zwemer, the so-called 'Apostle to Islam', writing of the need for a passion for God's glory to be the ultimate motive in mission, says:

"Prayer is the sole dynamic in the Acts of the Apostles ... God has a way of breaking through barriers and the unexpected is to be expected when He is leading on ... we have only to wait on God. His power is infinite. His time limit is eternity. **With God, the missionary enterprise has in it all the glory of the impossible**, the adventure of leading a forlorn hope to certain victory; the glory of apparent defeat and real triumph at the end." (Zwemer S, *Thinking Missions with Christ*, p 69, 70)

The glory of the impossible. The 'possible' glorified us, the possible is something attainable and achievable by our endeavours, our skill, our resources, our strength; but when the 'impossible' is accomplished it is unequivocally clear to all who it is that the glory belongs to.

Another missionary to islam, Lilius Trotter, who labored faithfully for the gospel in Algeria in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, also loved to delight in the God for whom nothing is impossible:

"Let us give ourselves up to believe for this new thing on the earth. Let us dare to test God's resources on it. Let us ask Him to kindly in us and keep aflame that **passion for the impossible that shall make us delight in it with Him**, till the day when we shall see it transformed into a fact." (Lilius Trotter cited in *A Passion for the Impossible* by Miriam Rockness, p 339)

'A passion for the impossible that shall make us delight in it with Him.' We need this 'passion' now more than ever, but is that not simply what it means to believe the gospel and to believe in the God of the gospel? A true, biblical renewal and reform of the Church of England in this present day may appear at times to be impossible. However, we ought not to despair, but rather remind ourselves that although 'with man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God' (Mark 10:27)

(p 143)

John Piper writes:

"Life is a war. That's not all it is. But it is always that ... very few people think that we are in a war that is greater than world War II or any imaginable nuclear war. Few reckon that Satan is a much worse enemy than any earthly foe or realize that the conflict is not restricted to any one global theatre but is in every town and city in the world." (John Piper, *Let the Nations be Glad* p 45, 43)

We live in a time and a culture when opposition to biblical truth and the biblical gospel is intensifying. It is a time for courage, not fear, a time when we need to hold fast to God's Word no matter how fierce the opposition or how bitter the conflict. As careful readers of the Bible, this ought not to surprise us. The Bible is peppered throughout the commands for courage, not to fear or be

afraid. We are reminded that we have been given 'a spirit not of fear but power and love and self-control' (2 Tim 1:7). (p 144)

Courage, even Christ-centred joy in the midst of trials, opposition and conflict, is a specifically vital characteristic which will be needed increasingly by the people of God in these days and the days to come. (p 144)

To do so we need to walk in vital, close communion with Jesus Christ, the Lion and the Lamb:

"There is only one thing that has helped me overcome these fears and it is zeal for the gospel and it is zeal for the gospel and its effects in the world. When I am living out the gospel – and the gospel is living in me with power my fears shrink to Lilliputian size. **If we walk with Jesus, we will begin to take on both His Lamb-like gentleness and His Lion-like courage.**"(Miller C John *Outgrowing the Ingrown Church*, p 114)

(p148)

"As a seminary student years ago, I had the privilege of attending lectures by Dr J I Packer. His reflections were stimulating in many ways. But over the years one simple sentence has echoed in my mind with almost haunting persistence: "DO not neglect the revival dimension in your ministry..." My plea comes down to this. Let's not neglect the revival dimension in our churches. It is biblical. It is right. It is of God. Let's stop being so timid. Let's trust God so much that we follow his Word without qualifying it to death. None of us has long to live. Why not do something boldly radical before you die? Follow God's Word fully. Don't censor it. Don't whittle it down to the narrow confines of your comfort zones. Trust that God is wise in all his Word and ways. Pray for more of him than you've ever had before. And then go beyond praying. Expect him to show himself near to you in new ways that will delight you and honour his own name. Venture your whole personal fulfillment on God, withholding nothing." (Ortlund R, *Revival Sent from God*, p 11, 13)

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